

**Evergreen Fire District
Board of Trustees
Meeting
Meeting Minutes
Regular Board Meeting of September 13, 2021 – 6:00 pm**

CALL MEETING TO ORDER:

Chairman Fallon calls meeting to order at 6:21 pm

TRUSTEES IN ATTENDANCE:

Fallon, Connolly, Gipe, Fontaine

TRUSTEES ABSENT:

Brockman

PERSONNEL IN ATTENDANCE:

Chief Williams

RECOGNIZE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE: *(none)*

PUBLIC COMMENT: *At this time, public may comment on any public matter that is not on the Agenda of the Meeting and that is within the jurisdiction of the District.
(none)*

FINANCIALS:

Discuss and approve July 2021 Financials (Action)

Motion; Connolly to approve checks written and accept the financial statements for July 2021; second by Fontaine; motion passes 4 to 0

PAST ITEMS/UPDATES:

1. Approve meeting minutes of August 2021 (Action)

Motion; Gipe to approve the meeting minutes of August 2021; second by Connolly; motion passes 4 to 0

2. Uncleared Checks Policy- Fallon to present policy (Action)

Fallon states he has gathered some information from Compliance Supplement for Audits of Local Government Entities-Claims and Warrants as well as having had communication with our JCCS auditor. Fallon states the end result is a motion to cancel unpaid warrants and checks that are over 1 year old. The District recognizes it is still required to make payment if requested up to 8 year after the warrant/check was written. The District is exempt from submitting these funds to the State under the Uniform Unclaimed Property Act. This means that the warrant/check is cancelled after 1 year. Fallon states if Trustees pass this as a motion then it becomes policy.

Motion; Fontaine to approve a motion to cancel unpaid warrants/checks over 1 year old with the District recognizing it is still required to make payment, if requested, up to 8 years after the warrant or check was written with District being exempt from submitting these funds to the State under the Uniform Unclaimed Property Act; second by Gipe; motion passes 4 to 0.

3. Trustmark Reserves Discussion (Action)

Fallon states the District has a \$7800 refund for the calendar year 2020 of which 10 personnel participated for the year. The District contributed \$500 each month to the employees. The premium is what the employee had to pay and if less than \$500, the premium was paid out of the \$500 and the difference went into an HSA account held by the employee. Two personnel had dependents and paid into the plan out of pocket. Fallon states \$51,000 represents all of the premiums that were paid by the District or the District and the employee. He states the % column represents the \$1465 divided by \$51,000 is 2.9% or \$225.30 of the refund. The other higher

\$14,000 premium represents 28% of the total and personnel would receive \$2204.00 out of the \$7800.00. Fallon states he had not checked to see if the money can be distributed to the HSA the employee should have set up and would be non-taxable vs. distributed as income which can be taxed. Trustees Fontaine and Connolly state that the only personnel who should receive a portion of the refund are those that had to pay in. Fallon states the refund is based on claims experience of all participants based on the premiums that were paid regardless of who paid them. Fallon states that the Board can distribute or keep the refund and distribute it in other ways such as a premium holiday. Gipe states the \$7800 would be about a 10% refund. Fontaine states the District is entitled to refund because it paid the majority of premiums. Gipe states the District didn't get insurance for the employees in anticipation of a refund. Fontaine states neither did the employees. Gipe states that the District doesn't get credit for people staying in good health by choice or luck and that the District only made a budgetary decision to pay \$500 per employee expecting to never see the money back. Gipe wants to distribute some of the refund to only the 2 personnel who paid in. Fallon states the District paid \$2400 in administrative costs that could be taken from the refund and then distribute the balance. Gipe disagrees because the District knew there would be administrative costs and never expected to receive a refund. Fallon agrees. Gipe asks if distributing the money to the 10 participants would be meaningful. Chief Williams states it would be meaningful but there has been no discussion or anticipation at the employee level other than the 2 people that have paid in. Gipe asks if those 2 people are FT long term employees who are going to be around and Chief Williams states one of the two have dropped to an "as needed" basis and gone elsewhere for full-time employment. Chief Williams acknowledges the health benefits are not 'the best' but 'are better than what they were 2 years ago when we didn't have anything' but that it would not serve as a tool for employee retention. Connolly agrees that the 2 employees who paid in should receive some of the refund.

Motion; Gipe to approve giving 0% of the refund to employees who did not pay in and to employee #62 because the employee dropped to PRN status and 50% of the refund to employee #58 for what was paid out of pocket with the balance going into a fund to be earmarked for future employer health insurance premiums; second by Fontaine; motion passes 3 to 1.

4. Exit Interviews Discussion (Action)

Chief Williams states that the department has always given exit interviews but has been more informal. He presents a more formal exit interview to the Board that he feels is pertinent to the Fire Service. He states there are no exit interview templates strictly for Fire Service. Fontaine asks how candid can an employee be when exit interview is performed by someone from the department. Chief Williams assures her that departing personnel are very candid about why they are leaving EFD and is most generally due to lack of opportunity or due to scheduling conflicts; not one employee out of the current 49 has only one job; several are working another full-time job. Most other personnel have 1 or 2 other part time jobs. He states they are able to easily do this due to the shift work; 24 hours on and 3 days off. He states most employees have left the District on good terms with the exception of 1 employee of whom Chief Williams has still offered to give a personal reference for. Chief Williams states that even if administration is not made directly aware by an employee with 'hard feelings' towards the department; he is always made aware because employees talk to each other. *(an interview exit sample is provided to Trustees)*. Chief Williams states that the 'W's' are always identified; what was your job; what can we improve on; what are your likes; what are your dislikes; what would you change. Chief Williams tells trustees that up to this point, personnel left due to low wages. Trustee Fontaine asks if the new pay scale has taken effect and Chief Williams states that as soon as the meeting minutes are signed from the last meeting they will be sent to Stahlberg and employees will receive the increase and retro pay on their paychecks tomorrow. Chief Williams states that the administrative assistant does provide exiting employees with their final paycheck and does get the opportunity to conduct exit interviews as well. Fallon states his question is 'Does the District want to use an external source for exit interviews or keep them internal?' Chief Williams states

there is a cost associated with an external sourcing and asks 'what is the return on the investment'? He states he is not in support of paying up to \$400 an hour for someone such as Lynda Brown but isn't in support of a total stranger, either. Fontaine states she feels the questions pertaining to training are good questions. Chief Williams states he gets requests for certain trainings that can't be supported by the budget. He states he will support whatever the Board chooses to do but that he wouldn't like to see the exit interviews perceived as a 'recruitment and retention' stand point but more of a gauge in how the District is doing. He states the recent significant increase in wages now leaves the District in competition with only two other departments. Fallon states he doesn't think a 'cost/benefit ratio' can be applied to exit interviews. He states that the questions on page 2 of the example sheets would be difficult for exiting personnel to answer truthfully knowing the exit interview questionnaire could become a permanent document in their file and could potentially affect their employment elsewhere. He states if the interview were done by an external source it would be summarized and never be in someone's personnel file. Fallon suggests to start using the exit interview form immediately and to consult with the types of entities that actually do provide exit interviews as well as on-site evaluations in area like administrative communication skills and etc. Fallon states he will look into it.

(Board Chairman Fallon states this discussion doesn't require any action)

NEW ITEMS:

1. New Accounting Firm Discussion (Action)

Fallon confirms that all trustees received his information regarding Jordahl & Sliter. Fontaine comments on the large increase in cost with Chief Williams stating he knows they are a good company but questions where the extra money would come from to pay them. Fallon states ADP (Automated Data Processing) has been around for a long time and everything would be done online with an enhanced version costing \$254.00 per month with a 5 month promotion reducing it to \$156.00. Fontaine asks if they are using QuickBooks and Fallon states they use their proprietary software but it integrates with QuickBooks. His question to J&S would be if they are comfortable integrating with QB to provide the monthly financial reports. He states there are solo CPA practitioners but have not spoken with any of them yet and that there are bookkeepers but are hard to find. Fontaine adds that quality could become an issue due to lack of over-site. She asks if the District needs to send out a request for proposal. Fallon states no because the dollar amount doesn't require it so a legal proposal isn't necessary. Fontaine asks if that is for input and the use of their program. Fallon states it is for the use of their program and that Cheri would have to do all of the data input whereas currently all data is entered by Stahlberg. Fontaine asks what the benefit is in having ADP. Fallon states that it appears to be less expensive but may not be because Cheri may have to spend a large amount of time inputting data. Fontaine asks what the cost of QB is per month and states professionals would have a license for multiple entities. Fallon states that Sliter and ADP, we would still be using QB. It would be whatever interface they have to get into QB. Stahlberg uses LogMe In; Jordahl/Sliter uses a different one but each have a fee of approximately \$50.00 per month allowing them to input data. If the District uses ADP, Cheri would have to input all the data from timesheets and it would be payroll only. Fontaine states the cost for payroll only with ADP is too expensive. Chief Williams reminds them that Stahlberg's contract ends on the 15th and that the current date is the 13th. Gipe asks if Stahlberg has increased their fees. Chief Williams states they have lost employees as well as clients and their performance has slipped significantly. Fontaine offers to make herself available to go with Fallon to speak with accounting firms. Gipe asks what the monthly pay roll is and Chief Williams states everything is dependent on call volume so it varies but that it is going to increase with the wage increases. Gipe suggests possibly bringing the accounting in house. Chief Williams states that because we are such a small agency with a fairly large payroll and budget now, it needs to be outsourced to remain transparent and could result in audit findings if it done

internally. Fallon states there was \$1.3 million spent in payroll last year and \$1.1 million the prior year and at \$1.3 million it comes out to approximately \$100,000 per month. Accounting fees for the prior 12 months was \$21,000 (billing and accounting) with \$1.3 million in total payroll expense and the audit accounting for \$8300.00. If the District went with Jordahl the cost would jump from approximately \$21,000 to \$35,000 per year. The District was paying Stahlberg's accountant fee of \$60 per hour; Jordahl wants \$100 per hour. Fontaine states he would talk with Gilbertson CPA. Connolly states that the District has 2 days to find a replacement accounting firm. Fallon asks if Stahlberg would possibly take on one more payroll and Chief Williams states he is doubtful. Fallon asks the other Trustees if he and Fontaine can act on behalf of the Board to make a decision on the accounting firm upon speaking with them and they are in agreement.

(No formal action on the accounting firm discussion is taken; discussion is to be continued)

2. **Community and Conference Room updates/upgrades (Action)**

(Fallon directs trustees to the 2 proposals included in their packets)

Fallon states the proposals address upgrades to the conference and community rooms with a combined cost of \$41,795.00 with some unknown additional costs for the IT consultant to coordinate the computer work. The cost encompasses cameras, microphones, and a new smart board and projector for both rooms. This is for recording purposes for training and any other administrative functions that occur. The cost has been budgeted for within the CIP budget. Cost for the community room upgrades is \$21,000 and the conference room is \$19,000 with the difference being the cost of the directional microphones and directional cameras in the community room. The rooms were originally done in 2009 for approximately \$15,000 for both rooms. That cost encompassed the computers, smart board and projector. Chief Williams asks Fallon if he is aware of any additional notice that must be given to the public due to being recorded. Fallon states a disclaimer can be added to each agenda stating board meetings are recorded and (he will provide the correct verbiage) and it should be announced prior to starting each board meeting.

Fontaine asks for confirmation that there is value in the upgrades and that they are necessary. Chief Williams states there is value to all upgrades. Fallon provides an example of the training that was not able to take place during the start of the pandemic but could have taken place remotely or could have at least been archived for personnel had there been the external cameras with the audio option available. Chief Williams provides another example of the last business meeting where Trustee Brockman (who is well versed in this type of equipment) came to the station and recorded the meeting with a standard camera on a tripod and with a boom mic but the audio file was so large on playback that it had to be sent in 3 different files and all 3 files had difficulty with audio and video staying in sync. The files were also too large for the server.

Fallon states when the rooms were built and equipped in 2009/2010, they were done so with the potential to serve as an incident command post if there were a disaster of some kind in the Valley because the 911 Center did not exist at the time. He states the officers room across from the conference room was built with the purpose as serving as a satellite office for sheriff/HP officers who declined the offer. Fontaine asks if Fallon is comfortable with the quality of the equipment and Fallon states he is because he is familiar with this type of equipment via the school board he serves on who installed the same quality equipment. The difference being the District's cameras would be permanently mounted in the ceiling vs. having to be set up and taken down before and after each meeting.

Motion: Gipe to purchase upgrades for both the community and conference rooms from Eye Hear as presented in the proposals; second by Fontaine; motion passes 4 to 0.

PROPOSALS:

(none)

RESOLUTIONS:

(none)

CHIEF'S REPORT:

1. July 2021 Call Volume

- A) Comparison Incident Count by Weekday/Hour (all zones) for July 2021
- B) Comparison Incident Statistics for July 2021

A Chief Williams state from January through July of 2021 call volume total is 352 calls vs. 242 last year during the same timeframe. EMS calls from Jan to July 2021 is 1,808 vs. 1,640 during the same time frame last year. IFT call volume is currently being closely tracked and as of July of 2021 there were 121 IFT transports vs. 149 same timeframe last year. He states the decline is in relation to the hourly conversion that was taking place within the department and many IFTs had to be declined in July. He states the numbers are still high for the year at 971 total IFT's vs. 807 during the same period last year. Kalispell call volume for mutual aid is at 278 vs. 259 this time last year and Chief Williams expects a decline as Kalispell continues to hire. However, Creston mutual aid had significantly increased with 103 EMS calls vs. 69 this time last year. He states that number has almost doubled and most likely has to do with the growth taking place there. Chief Williams distributes a Payer Mixed Report to trustees that provides them with an idea of where revenue is coming from; pointing out that Creston has a different payer matrix with much of it being private pay and BCBS with less Medicare/Medicaid. The contractual agreements (IFT) pay 36% of the total payer matrix.

Chief Williams requests the Board revisit the Covid Incentive Discussion and that it be an item on the agenda for the next board meeting.

Adjourned @ 8:30 pm

The President of the Board of Trustees, as presiding officer of any meeting of the Board of Trustees, may close the meeting during the time the discussion relates to a matter of individual privacy; and, then, if, and only if, the presiding officer determines that the demands of individual privacy clearly exceed the merits of public disclosure. The right of individual privacy may be waived by the individual about whom the discussion pertains; and, in that event, the meeting must be open.


Chair Fallon or Vice Chair Connolly


Secretary Brockman